

## Forces

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Volume 2018

Article 55

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3-28-2018

## Sisters

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### Recommended Citation

Boyd, April (2018) "Sisters," *Forces*: Vol. 2018 , Article 55.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.collin.edu/forces/vol2018/iss1/55>

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# Sisters

## **Cover Page Footnote**

Winner of the Writers' Block Choice Award

## SISTERS

April Boyd

*Winner of the Writers' Bloc  
Choice Award*

**M**Y SISTER SHOWS UP only when she needs something. Last week it was my flat-iron. This week it's my phone charger.

"I'll bring it back tomorrow," she says before I've even given her permission to leave the house with it. Before I can say anything, she's shutting the front door behind her. I don't see her tomorrow, or the day after that.

The next week, I find her car in the driveway when I get home from class. When I get inside, she returns the phone charger and then points at my mouth. "Your lipstick. Can I borrow that for work?"

"Will you actually bring it back tomorrow?" I ask.

She raises her eyebrows but recovers quickly. "Sure."

Late that night I hear the front door unlock, and then a knock on my bedroom door, accompanied by sounds of sniffing.

"Are you awake?" my sister whispers.

I mumble a "yes" and set down my book as she pushes open the door, wobbling inside on her too-tall platforms. My bedside lamp illuminates thick black rivers on her cheeks, my lipstick smeared and faded on her mouth. She climbs into bed with me and covers her face.

"They don't love me there," she slurs. "They don't love me like you and Mom and Dad do, Alice."

I nod and hug her as she cries and hiccups and says things I can't make out, until she is sober enough to drive home, she thinks. I see her again three days later.

"Someone at work stole the lipstick," she says breezily. "Probably that girl who's jealous cause I get more customers. You can imagine..." She rolls her eyes and smiles like this is something I can relate to.

"I can pay you back, though," she adds when I say nothing. She pulls a crumpled wad of ones out of her pocket and counts them before offering me a handful. I almost take the money until I think about where it came from.

"Maybe you should quit." My words come out in a rush and I'm surprised as soon as I say them.

My sister clenches her fist around the money and drops her hand. "Maybe I have bills to pay. Not all of us live under Mommy and Daddy's roof."

"You could move back. Get out of... there."

For a second she looks at me sadly, almost as if she's considering it, but then the moment is gone.

"Not gonna happen, little sister." She turns around and heads for the front door, but pauses before she opens it.

"I'm sorry about your lipstick," she says. She doesn't look back and I don't go after her.

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